

Please amend the Application as follows.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 4, 6, 10 and 11 without prejudice.

Please add the following Claims 14 and 15.

~~A~~ 14. The process of Claim 1 wherein the pH value of the mixture of step (a) is set at 6 to 7.

B¹ 15. The process of Claim 1 wherein said second aqueous solution comprises a member selected from the group consisting of sodium dihydrogen phosphate, sodium hydrogen phosphate, sodium phosphate, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogen carbonate, alkali salts of citric acid, alkali salts of succinic acid and combinations thereof. ~~A~~

Please replace Claims 1, 2, 5 and 12 with the following.

--1. (Twice Amended, Clean) A process for the production of low-viscosity water-soluble cellulose ethers by oxidative decomposition of higher-viscosity cellulose ethers with hydrogen peroxide, comprising:

- B²
- (a) forming, under conditions of intensive mixing and at temperatures of 65 - 125°C, a mixture comprising, (i) higher-viscosity cellulose ethers, and (ii) an aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide which is present in an amount of 0.5 to 1.8 wt.% in relation to the dry cellulose ether, the solid content of the mixture is no lower than 25 wt.% in relation to the total quantity of the mixture; and
 - (b) agitating continuously the mixture of step (a) at temperatures of 65 - 125°C until approximately at least 90% of the hydrogen peroxide has been spent,

wherein during or after the decomposition reaction, the pH value of the mixture of step (a) is set at more than 4.5, by adding to said mixture a second aqueous solution which has a pH of 5 to 12, provided that when said second aqueous solution is added during the decomposition reaction said second aqueous solution may

optionally contain, in solution, the hydrogen peroxide required for the decomposition reaction.

B²
concl'd
2. (Twice Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein said mixture of step (a) is formed by adding aqueous hydrogen peroxide in portions.

B³
5. (Twice Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein a higher-viscosity cellulose ether having a dry cellulose ether content of 35 - 80 wt.%, in relation to the total quantity of cellulose ether and solvent, is used.

B⁴
12. (Once Amended, Clean) The process of Claim 1 wherein a higher-viscosity cellulose ether having a dry cellulose ether content of 40 to 55 wt. %, in relation to the total quantity of cellulose ether and solvent, is used.--
